

## DREAM FOR OTHERS® | EP #5: SOFTLY SPOKEN STRENGTH



You are listening to the Dream For Others® podcast with Naomi Arnold, Episode 5.

*Dream For Me, Dream For You, Dream For Others®. And now your host, award-winning life and business coach, Naomi Arnold...*

Hey there

Welcome. And thank you for joining me.

I'm specifically going to talk about softly spoken folk today. So if you consider yourself to be softly spoken or to generally have a gentle approach to communication, this podcast might be for you.

OR, maybe you know somebody who is softly spoke and gentle... Maybe a loved one or a peer or a mentor or a manager or a staff member... who you'll then be able to tell what you learn in this episode.

I hadn't originally planned to do an episode on this topic.

The idea was actually sparked when I was doing some research for the Communication Styles episode.

After drafting the initial outline, I thought "oh I should probably go look in my university's database to see if there are any articles on the different communication styles. And in doing this, I stumbled across an article title that caught my attention.

The article was in a Nursing Management journal and was titled [Softly Spoken Managers: A Blend of Communication Styles](#). This immediately sparked my interest and I thought "ohhhh yes, the sometimes hidden or underestimated strength in softly spoken folk... I must do a podcast on this."

Before I launch in though, I'll pop the reference for the article in the show notes for this episode for those who are interested.

It basically explored whether a soft-spoken person could be a successful nurse manager. And I thought the same question could be applied to management more generally, and to many other contexts too.

Can a soft-spoken person be a great public speaker? Can a soft-spoken person be a great life coach or business coach? Can a soft-spoken person be a great teacher? Can a soft-spoken person be a successful entrepreneur?

Now I might be biased, as I am a soft-spoken person, but my immediate answer was "yes, of course."

Yet a lot of the time, soft-spoken people think that this is not the case, or that being softly-spoken puts them at a disadvantage or is considered a weakness.

When many people think of successful managers, or popular public speakers, or a successful and well-known entrepreneurs - they often automatically think of those who are more bold, or extraverted, or performative, or energised. They don't always think of those who are quiet and gentle and soft-spoken.

Yet being gentle and softly spoken, can be a positive trait.

This is something that I've taken a while to really appreciate and recognise within myself. It wasn't until I was at least a couple of years into my coaching business that I fully owned that my gentleness, my shyness, the fact that I am soft-spoken is a strength and is actually something that draws many folk toward me.

This is one of the things I love about the [Gentle Business Mastermind](#) that I co-created with Amanda Rootsey and Nicola Newman.

We as guides and mentors in the program are all gentle and softly spoken, and that is in part what attracts our members to our work. We demonstrate that it is possible to be this way, and to still be successful entrepreneurs or business owners.

And not all of our members are introverted like us, not all of our members would necessarily even identify themselves with being softly spoken or gentle. But they certainly see the strength in those characteristics we possess and are in part attracted to us and our work because of this.

Another point in my business that helped me realise this, was when I was updating my testimonial page on day. As I was reading over the feedback my previous clients had given about my coaching, the word "gentle" was appearing as a common theme.

I'd previously thought that people wanted a purely assertive coach, you know, someone who is super direct, super on top of you, who won't let you get away with a thing.

But then when I was reading my testimonials, I could see my clients were saying things like: "Naomi is a gentle powerhouse", "Naomi will hold you gently accountable", "Naomi's gentle yet direct approach helped me..."... these phrases were popping up all over the place, and it finally sunk in...

You can be direct, you can be assertive, you can hold people accountable - AND be gentle and softly-spoken. It isn't an either / or. These characteristics are actually compatible. These characteristics combined can be a real strength and can really help people move forward, do their best work, and truly feel like they have someone in their corner supporting them.

The third example that comes to mind where I realised how much of an asset being a quietly spoken and gentle person could be, was when I started to do more public speaking.

One of the reasons why I feared public speaking so much is that I thought great public speakers were all energetic and dramatic and really put on a show, you know? Most of the entrepreneurs and coaches who I had seen speaking were like this.

Then one day, I went to a [human rights conference](#) at Monash University. And I remember listening to people like [Stan Grant](#) and the now MP [Anne Aly](#) who had a completely different style to those I'd seen in the personal development industry. They didn't walk around the room, use big arm gestures, and have this big presence like those I'd seen at coaching and business conferences. They stood behind the lecturn with their notes, and they spoke so powerfully.

Then just before I left that day to go to another conference, I heard [Mariam Veiszadeh](#) speak. She too stood behind the lecturn, with her speech in front of her, she would read and speak with passion in her gentle voice and I had never been so moved by a speaker in my life. We laughed and we cried together.

And I remember thinking, my whole idea of what made a great speaker was wrong.

A great speaker didn't perform, a great speaker just showed up as themselves. And for some people that is walking around room, using hand gestures, being bold and dramatic. And for some people, it means standing behind a lecturn, with your notes and speaking your truth. That both styles, and every style in between, can be equally commanding and impactful.

Since then, this realisation has been brought home to me many times when I've seen great speakers with different styles speak. And it was something that my public speaking coach, [Geraldine Barckworth](#) reminded me of too. She said to go search on Youtube for speakers who had a style more like what mine would naturally be, to inspire me as a soft-spoken speaker.

She gave me [a speech that Meryl Streep made](#) as an example, and I finally fully realise that again, you can be softly-spoken and a motivating and inspiring and impactful and powerful speaker.

It doesn't have to be either / or.

Now these are just examples from my professional life, as they are ones that really landed for me. There are of course many benefits to being gentle and softly spoken in one's personal life too.

Let's circle back to the article I read about Nurse Managers. Can you guess what they found in their study?

I'll share some direct quotes:

“Behaviours of soft-spoken managers generally include: quiet voice, gentleness, deliberative, self composed, and warm and empathetic.”

“Even when managing a large work group or giving a speech, the soft-spoken manager maintains the unique phenomenon of a quiet voice. In situations where others raise their voices, this manager remains calm. In fact, a quiet manager actually may gain control by speaking even more softly. Silence can de-escalate anxious situations. Nonverbal cues such as eyes and facial expression can communicate requirements as well as verbal language.”

And finally, “a manager who uses a quiet voice and approaches situations from a non-aggressive and gentle position can promote effective relations with others and achieve managerial objectives.”

Now obviously, just because you're soft spoken doesn't mean you hold other characteristics that might make a great manager, or entrepreneur, or friend, or public speaker. Obviously all of these different roles require other strengths and characteristic too.

Being a good listener. Being assertive. For example are strengths too.

But you can be soft-spoken and a good listener. You can be soft-spoken and assertive. You can be soft-spoken and confident. You can be soft-spoken and speak with conviction. You can be soft spoken and skilled at holding accountable. You can be soft-spoken and a leader. You can be soft-spoken and energising. You can be soft-spoken and motivating. You can be soft-spoken and inspiring.

You get my point, right?

So if you are quiet and soft-spoken person, don't be like the old me, who would hide behind this as an excuse to not do things that I could be great at. That promotion that I would apply for because I thought being quietly spoken meant I wouldn't be a great manager, that I wouldn't be a great group facilitator, meant I couldn't speak as an expert on projects. Those speaking gigs I turned down because I thought I couldn't be an engaging and interesting speaker as a soft-spoken person. Those opportunities or options for visibility in my business that I avoided because I thought being soft-spoken was a weakness.

Don't let it stop you anymore. Start to pay attention to where you could be hiding yourself back or not fully showing up or sabotaging your goals because you've been programmed to believe that being gentle and quiet and a soft-spoken person isn't conducive to success. Start to challenge that. Start to question some of the binaries that show up here.

Because we need you. We need you just as much as we need those who speak with a louder and bolder voice.

I would love if you would leave a comment on the show notes page for this episode, or tag me on social media at @NaomiLArnold #DreamForOthers, and let me know one thing that you are going to do or shift or be more conscious of moving forward after having listened to this episode. If you are a soft-spoken person, it might be something that you're going to do to embrace this side of you more. If you aren't a soft-spoken person, maybe you'll forward this episode or use some of what I've shared to encourage an awesome soft-spoken in your life.

And if you are a business owner, I encourage you to head on over to [www.gentlebusinessmastermind.com](http://www.gentlebusinessmastermind.com) as this is a whole community of gentle folk uniting and supporting each other in building their businesses.

When this episode goes live, we will be sharing a free video series on that website around doing business gently. We will then be opening our doors to new enrolments in the 12-month mastermind experience from next week and would love to welcome you there. Just sign up via that website to get further details.

And if you are listening to this episode at a later date, you will likely be able to access our free e-book on doing business gently or another free resources via that page. So please check out [www.gentlebusinessmastermind.com](http://www.gentlebusinessmastermind.com) if this resonates with you.

I hope you have an amazing rest of the day, and I look forward to connecting with you again soon.

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